DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 401 979 JC 970 015

AUTHOR Gerda, Joseph
TITLE English Writing Placement Recommendations at College of the Canyons: An Analysis of Disproportionate Impact.
INSTITUTION College of the Canyons, Santa Clarita, CA. Office of Institutional Development.
PUB DATE Aug 96
NOTE 10p.; For a related report on reading placement recommendations, see JC 970 016 and JC 970 018.
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS College English; Community Colleges; *Student Characteristics; *Student Placement; *Test Bias; Test Validity; Two Year Colleges; *Two Year College Students
IDENTIFIERS College of the Canyons CA

ABSTRACT

A study was undertaken at California's College of the Canyons (CoC) to determine whether evidence existed of disproportionate impact in English course placement based on student ethnicity, gender, or age. Data were compiled for all 4,309 students tested between spring 1993 and fall 1995, while the standard for disproportionate impact was taken from Equal Employment Opportunity Commission guidelines that the selection rate of any given subgroup should not be less than 80% of the majority group. At CoC, students who score 16 out of 40 or higher on the English placement are recommended to take associate degree applicable English courses. Among the study sample, 3,880 students were recommended to take degree-applicable courses. An analysis of the placement results found no evidence of disproportionate impact by ethnicity, age, or gender. Placements by ethnicity indicated that 93.8% of White students were placed into credit courses, compared to 85.2% of Hispanics, 85.9% of Asian, 81.6% of Black, and 81% of Native American students. Similarly, 91.8% of females and 89.85 of males were placed into credit courses. Care should be taken, however, in interpreting the data, since the EEOC standard of 80% is only a guideline and data on student characteristics were self-reported by students, which can lead to intentional or unintentional errors. (AJL)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED 401 979

English Writing Placement Recommendations at College of the Canyons: An Analysis of Disproportionate Impact

College of the Canyons
August 1996

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Joseph Gerda
Professor, Mathematics

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☒ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

N. Mattice

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

JC 970 015

Abstract

Analyses of the rates at which placement recommendations for college level and basic skills English reading and writing courses are made, based upon the College Board's APS writing test, were conducted. Specific comparisons were made for the student background characteristics of ethnicity, gender, and age. There was no evidence of disproportionate impact in English writing course placement recommendations for any of the subgroups investigated.

English Writing Course Placement Recommendations: An Analysis of Disproportionate Impact

The issue of disproportionate impact as it relates to the assessment and placement of college students involves the extent to which placement rates into college level courses vary across subgroups of students. Differences in placement rates may be due to the interactive effects of a number of factors and would serve as a signal that a closer look at the test in question and its relationship with student background characteristics is needed. The study reported here was undertaken to determine whether there is evidence for disproportionate impact in English course placement at College of the Canyons. For those cases where disproportionate impact is found, further investigation should be undertaken to determine the reason the disproportionate impact.

While the discussion of what constitutes "differential placement rates" continues, one standard has emerged. The standard comes from EEOC (Equal Employment Opportunity Commission) guidelines concerning disproportionate impact in employee selection. It holds that disproportionate impact is evidenced when the selection rate of an impacted group is less than 80% of the majority group. The guidelines make it clear that the 80% value should be used with some care and interpreted within the full context of the local setting. As an example, they note that "smaller differences in selection rate may constitute adverse impact where they are significant in both statistical and practical terms" and also that "greater differences in selection rate may not constitute adverse impact where the differences are based on small numbers and are not statistically significant" (Uniform Guidelines on Employee Selection Procedures, 1978). This "80%" level has been offered as a reasonable criterion for disproportionate impact studies of placement tests used in the California Community Colleges, with the primary difference being that placement rates into courses are targeted, rather than selection for employment.

English Writing Course Placement Recommendations.

The English writing portion of the College Board Assessment and Placement Services (APS) test is administered to incoming COC students whose primary language is English, for the purpose of making an initial English course placement recommendation. Data were compiled for all students who were tested between Spring 1993 and Fall 1995 totaling 4309 students for the writing test.

According to the placement rule (see Table 1 below) students who score 16 or higher (out of 40 Possible) are recommended to take an associate degree applicable course (English 90 or higher), while various ranges of lower scores are associated with recommendations for English 35 or lower. (The descriptors "degree applicable" and "associate degree applicable" are used interchangeably in this report, as are "non-degree applicable" , and non-associate degree applicable.) Overall rates of placement into these courses can be readily determined, as can such rates for various subgroups. For purposes of assessing possible disproportionate impact, the critical categories are recommended placement into non-degree applicable courses (English 35 or below) versus degree-applicable courses (English 90 and above).

Table 1
Placement Rule for the APS English-Writing Test

Score Range	Placement Recommendation
0-10	English 11
11-15	English 35
16-27	English 90
28-40	English 101

Student Ethnicity.

Table 2 presents the number and percent of students in each of the ethnic categories who were recommended to degree-applicable and non-degree applicable English writing courses are displayed in Table 2. A total of 3880 of the entire sample was recommended to college level English courses (English 35 or above).

Table 2

Placement Into Basic Skills and College Level English Writing Courses, by Ethnic Category

	White	Hispanic	Asian	Black	Native America	Other
Non Degree	171 (6.2%)	129 (14.8%)	36 (18.4%)	23 (18.4%)	12 (19%)	18 (9.8%)
Degree	2601 (93.8%)	742 (85.2%)	219 (85.9%)	102 (81.6%)	51 (81%)	165 (90.2%)
Total	2772	871	255	125	63	183
EEOC ratio	baseline	91%	91.6%	87%	86.3%	96.1%

As noted earlier, EEOC guidelines indicate that all relevant subgroups should be selected (in this case, recommended for enrollment into English 90 or above) at a rate that is at least 80% or the rate of the majority group. For this analysis, the "majority group is typically the group with the highest selection/placement rate. The critical value based on the EEOC 80% rate standard in this case is 75% (80% of the 93.8% rate for Whites). Therefore the placements rates for all subgroups meets

the standard. Thus there is no evidence that a disproportionate impact exist in placement recommendations based on ethnicity.

Student Gender

Table 3 presents the number and percent of females and males receiving various English writing course placement recommendations. The sample consists of 52.9% females and 47.1% males. About Ninety percent of both males and females were recommended to degree applicable courses. Applying the EEOC standard, the critical percentage is 73.4% (80% of the female rate of 91.8%). Since the placement rate for males exceeds this value, there is no evidence for disproportionate impact involving the sex of the student being tested.

Table 3

Placement Into Basic Skills and College Level English Writing Courses, by Gender

	Female	Male
Non Degree	186 (8.2)	207 (10.2%)
Degree	2093 (91.8%)	1821 (89.8%)
Total	2279	2028
EEOC ratio	baseline	97.8%

Student Age

Table 4 presents the placement recommendation rates into degree applicable and non-degree applicable English courses for

the following age categories; 19 and below, 20-24, 25-29, 30-39, and over 40. While these categories do not correspond perfectly with the statewide MIS categories, they nevertheless divide the age continuum into meaningful subgroups. Further, the consistency in placement rates across these groups is striking. The EEOC guideline of 80% results in a critical value of 74.2% (80% of the rate of 92.7% for the age group 19 or less). All age categories are well above this critical value, therefore it appears that there is no disproportionate impact in placement recommendations due to the age of the student.

Table 3

Placement Into Basic Skills and College Level English Writing Courses, by Age Category

	Student's Age				
	0-19	20-24	25-29	30-39	over 40
Non Degree	225 (7.3%)	66 (12.1%)	35 (13.5%)	34 (11.8%)	24 (23.5%)
Degree	2868 (92.7%)	480 (87.9%)	224 (86.5%)	253 (88.2%)	78 (76.5%)
Total	3093	546	259	287	102
	baseline	94.8%	93.3%	95.1%	82.5%

Summary and Discussion

A few caveats warrant reemphasizing. First, the EEOC criterion is just a guideline. It would be a mistake to assume that all groups not identified as impacted in this study are truly free from such impact. Second, all information on student background characteristics is obtained via self-reports. While this method tends to be quite reliable, it is possible that in some cases students may have provided incorrect information,

either intentional, or due to carelessness.

Given the concerns above, there appears to be no evidence of a disproportionate impact due to ethnicity, gender, or age. In fact, with a few exceptions, most values greatly exceed the EEOC standard of 80%.

References

Isonio, Steven (1992)
English Placement Recommendations at Golden West College: An Analysis of Disproportionate Impact

Matriculation Local Research Options Committee (1992). Assessment Validation Project Local Research Options, Design 12

Matriculation Local Research Options Committee (1992) Matriculation Evaluation: Monographs On Designs From the Research Options Project.

Uniform Guidelines on Fmployee Selection Procedures. Federal Register, Vol. 43, No.166 Friday, August 25, 1978, pp.38,296-38,309.